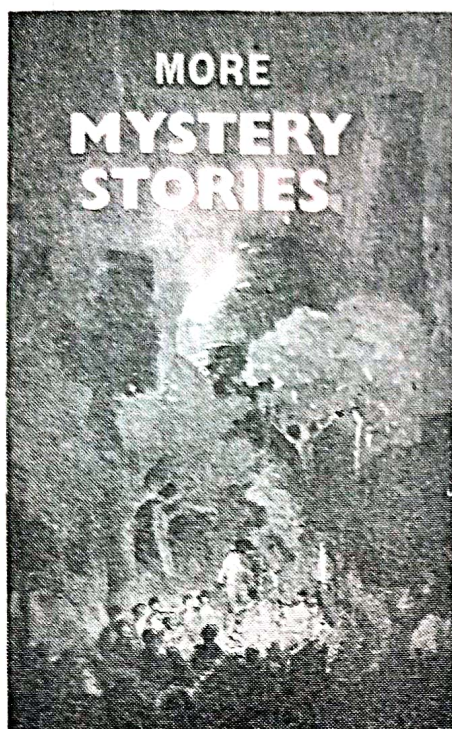


BOOK-TALK

MORE MYSTERY STORIES

—MEERA BHATNAGAR

Reading is an enjoyable habit which is becoming increasingly popular. This has become possible with an ever increasing development of reading material and improvements in techniques of publishing.

Story writing, more specifically short-story writing, has now come to be accepted as an honoured literary form that has a tremendous power to educate as well.

More Mystery Stories is a collection of short stories for young children. Each story has all the essential ingredients of an adventure story. The plot in each of the stories is powerful. There is plenty of surprise and excitement. Events move

fast, gripping the reader's attention thoroughly.

"Music Behind Doors" by Sigrun Srivastava, a prolific writer and a well-known illustrator of children's stories, is the story of a father who struggles to save his child from the world of superstitions which erode the very fabric of human existence. The story unfolds itself through a strange music filtering into the room. Moving delicately, the children discover the mystery behind a dizzy whirl of sands.

"The Invisible Burglar" by Nita Berry, a winner of many prizes for her writings, is about spooky business which at once excites the reader's imagination. Aman and Saman are two young boys who solve a theft case—a really shocking business. Someone has stolen the General Sahib's medals. Using simple clues such as a line of small ants and a sticky white stain, the children help Dondi Dada catch the thief before he can get away.

"Mystery of the Vanishing Biscuits" is by Poile Sengupta, who has won children's hearts as a regular contributor to the world of children's stories. Need for food is a basic need that leads to a number of unusual deeds. Young boarding schoolgirls use all sorts of sums—additions and subtractions to solve "the problem of the missing biscuits." Although they were only biscuits after all, their disappearance upsets the children greatly leading to their adventure.

"Lost and Found" by Vaijaynati Tonpe, an editor with years of experience in the field of children's literature, is an adventure story. Adventure begins along the icy waters of river Teesta where the children go to collect some drift-wood. The four children, amidst Oohs and Aahs, manage to catch a gang of smugglers. However, the best part of the story is

that the dense forest backdrop gives the readers a feeling of enchantment right through.

"Detectives" by Kamini Kaushal, an actress of rare repute and an author, creator of toys and films for children, is a dramatic story staged beautifully. It is all about a set of naughty children and their much harassed 'Masterji' who forms the comical central character of the story. The recovery of a hidden treasure from a tunnel in a mountain in the most casual of manners is what makes the story absorbing.

"The Roaring Monuments" is by S.G. Haider, an author of several prize-winning books and stories for children who is enthusiastically involved in the promotion of good literature for children in Urdu. It is about a group of children on a school camping trip. The scene is set in the village of Mehrauli covered with ruins of domes, crumbling walls and heaps of stones from broken graves. As the children decide to settle down at sunset around the camp-fire, they hear roars... loud roars which seem to be coming from the ruins. And this sets the ball rolling for the story to unfold.

"The Lucky Coral Ring" is a story by Swapna Dutta who writes in several languages and has many works to her credit. The story is woven around the delicate theme of some people who are obsessed with the idea of lucky mascots. An expensive coral ring is stolen because it seems to be covered in the robes of dame luck. A totally feminine-oriented story, it seems to suggest that the fair sex is more inclined towards superstitions.

"Treasure Island" by Arup Kumar Dutta, a former lecturer of English Literature whose books have won several

awards, is a story revolving around the recovery of a missing boat on the banks of the river Brahmaputra, written in a beautiful style. For example, "a light river must wafted languidly in the breeze and clung to the clumps of reed, creating spectral shapes..." the story makes good reading. In this story, the city-children will get a chance to breathe into the fresh cool breeze of the outdoor life.

"The Antique Necklace" is by Savitri Makhijani. She has contributed quite significantly in the promotion of children's literature. A violin which holds the secret message is the subject of a hot pursuit. Excitement increases through the lines of the story as the plot builds up. It is an action-packed story which moves quick as a flash in the gathering dusk.

"Secret of the Hollow Tree" by R.K. Murthy, a free-lance writer and a regular contributor of articles in magazines and newspapers, revolves around secret messages being sent around in code form. Solving puzzles in code has always been the passion with growing children. Young 'grey cells' keep themselves busy by trying to break the code. By successfully deciphering the code, they manage to prevent criminals from having a field day.

On the whole, the book makes good, wholesome and interesting reading. The young readers will surely appreciate the noteworthy effort that has gone into the preparation of this book.

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